

Culmination In The Moral Domain:  
Combat Stress

A Monograph  
by

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Armor



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## ABSTRACT

CULMINATION IN THE MORAL DOMAIN: COMBAT STRESS by MAJ John E. Schlott, USA, 43 pages.

The works of du Picq, de Saxe, SLA Marshall, Keegan, and Moran discuss battlefield stress in terms of the individual soldier. Current Army doctrine in FM 26-2, Management of Stress in Army Operations, also addresses the individual, focusing on recognition and prevention. Although these works are useful, very few soldiers face the stress of battle singularly. Today squads and crews are the first organization to deal with stress in conventional battles. As lethality of the battlefield increases, these units are confronted by greater stresses, yet receive little training in recognition, prevention, and coping with stress. The better these groups deal with stress the less it will effect the conduct of operations.

This monograph reviews how combat stress became recognized as a type of military impairment and how current Army doctrine addresses the first aid for this emotional wound. Secondly, an overview of combat stress is provided. This overview focuses on the individual, attempting to identify the sources of combat stress; the symptoms displayed by soldiers; methods of treatment; and techniques to control the effects of stress. This overview is then applied at the squad and vehicle crew level. How groups react to combat stress is discussed along with ways to counter its effects through reduction techniques, leadership and stability. Finally, conclusions are presented that attempt to chart a path in terms of doctrine, organization, training, materiel and leader development for stress management in future conflicts.

The monograph concludes that current doctrine is sound but that organizations that are made to deal with stress are needed. The design of materiel which maximizes human potential while reducing the secondary effect of vibration is required. Training must continue to replicate combat, to include overhead small arms fire and danger close artillery observation. The strongest recommendation is that leader development should focus training dollars on producing leaders who can individually cope with stress and collectively reduce the stress in units they command.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The works of du Picq, de Saxe, SLA Marshall, Keegan, and Moran discuss battlefield stress in terms of the individual soldier. Current Army doctrine in FM 26-2, Management of Stress in Army Operations, also addresses the individual, focusing on recognition and prevention. Although these works are useful, very few soldiers face the stress of battle singularly. Today squads and crews are the first organization to deal with stress in conventional battles. As lethality of the battlefield increases, these units are confronted by greater stresses, yet receive little training in recognition, prevention, and coping with stress. The better these groups deal with stress the less it will effect the conduct of operations.

Operation COHORT demonstrated the Army's belief that unit cohesion improves performance, but there is little doctrine on building cohesion to sustain unit effectiveness. Losses and replacements erode established cohesion. Combat stress acts as an accelerator on this erosion which makes units less effective. Both now and on the nonlinear battlefield of the future, stress management will be a combat multiplier. Units that manage stress will be able to remain in battle longer. This becomes critical as the Army gets smaller and units become fewer in number. By identifying the symptoms of combat stress casualties,

methods of stress prevention, and techniques in treatment of stress, units can take action to maintain effectiveness, thereby improving unit combat power. The purpose of this monograph is to provide leaders the necessary information to control stress in units so that these units remain effective.

The paper begins with a review of how combat stress became recognized as a type of military impairment and how current Army doctrine addresses the first aid for this emotional wound. Secondly, an overview of combat stress is provided. This overview focuses on the individual, attempting to identify the sources of combat stress; the symptoms displayed by soldiers; methods of treatment; and techniques to control the effects of stress. This overview is then applied at the squad and vehicle crew level. How groups react to combat stress is discussed along with ways to counter its effects through reduction techniques, leadership and stability. Finally, conclusions are presented that attempt to chart a path in terms of doctrine, organization, training, materiel and leader development for stress management in future conflicts.

The monograph focuses on the soldier that makes up squads and crews. It does not start, "There I was ..." so it is not a war story. It is an attempt to identify which conditions of the battlefield cause stress in soldiers.

Actual experiences of soldiers will be presented to illustrate the sources and countermeasures of stress. There will be no references to analytical studies of controlled experiments with statistical data because the validity in replicating combat situations is circumspect. Each occurrence of stress is unique in conditions and reactions of individuals and groups. Because of this the leader is key in units coping with stress.

Finally, a path will be charted for future actions to help units cope with stress and reduce stress.

Organizations that are made to deal with stress are recommended, as is the design of materiel to maximize human potential. The strongest recommendation is that leader development should focus training dollars on producing leaders who can individually cope with stress and collectively reduce the stress in units they command.

One of the major components of the disease that was labelled 'nostalgia' during the Civil War and that we today call 'combat stress' is fear. The following poem describes fear that is manifested as combat stress.

'The Shell  
The silver scream comes nearer  
--faster than wind, faster than sound--  
it is the song of a new-born thing,  
singing her joy that she lives at last.

Her life is short, too short,  
but joyous more than many million things  
She droops to die, so soon,  
for now she cries no more from joy,

but in her agony of death  
her scream has changed to one of fear.

She falls to earth.  
And there's a breathless hush upon the land  
for death is near.  
For in this particle of tiny time  
her fear is caught by those nearby,  
and stomachs turn and fingers twitch  
and then within her agony of death  
she leaves the world.

She leaves it with a cry, a shout, a  
trumpet-call  
that brings a terror to your heart,  
and death flies all around.

Her grave stands open to the sky:  
and there she lies together with  
the shattered limbs and bleeding mouths  
and eyes that nevermore shall see.

This poem was written by a Captain Browne of the Royal Tank Regiment sometime in 1941. It was found by Captain Robert Crisp during OPERATION CRUSADER in November, 1941, and published in the book Brazen Chariots. The poem's description of death is timeless. It is the fear that death creates and the poem describes that produces stress in combat. This paper is an attempt to describe combat stress as it would be manifested today and how it might be encountered in future wars.

## II. ARMY DOCTRINE

Battle stress casualties became part of Army doctrine during the twentieth century. Prior to World War I there is little evidence that battle stress casualties were

recognized. During the Civil War stress was labelled 'nostalgia', and other nations also failed to accurately identify these casualties. The French believed the soldier lost his will as a fighter while the British and German attributed stress to a character flaw. Only the Russians recognized hysteria in soldiers, but like other nations they did not believe that combat produced both mental and physical wounds.

The work of American, German and British psychiatrists during World War I recorded a great deal of knowledge on what was called grenade fever, shell shock or nervous breakdowns. Speculation on the cause of these mental disorders centered on physical wounds caused by concussion, being buried in a trench or from inhaling gases from explosions. This work was the basis for the methods of treatment between the wars, and during World War II.

Like most studies these recommendations were not implemented. At Kasserine Pass 34% of the United States Army casualties were mental disorders. Contrary to policy these men were evacuated well to the rear for treatment. Of these men only 3% returned to duty. Policy at the time was to treat battle stress casualties as far forward as possible. Divisions were authorized two psychiatrists, but these authorizations were not completely filled until  
1  
1944.

Current doctrine addresses stress and its effect on the individual soldier in FM 100-5. In discussing leadership this keystone manual stresses that men, not machines, win wars. It goes on to explain that units more often than one soldier fail catastrophically. This infers that the effect of stress on the individual can be contagious within a unit. Most importantly the manual asserts that the primary function of leadership is to inspire soldiers to carry out missions in dangerous situations under extreme stress. FM 100-5 makes the leader responsible for controlling the effects of stress within his unit in order to maintain combat effectiveness.

FM 26-2, Management of Stress in Army Operations, expands the principles outlined in FM 100-5. It explains that soldiers under stress reduce the effectiveness of their unit. To sustain peak performance, units must adapt to changing stressful situations. This ability to cope is a leader's responsibility. The manual tells leaders that they must quickly identify and treat battle fatigue casualties. These leaders must understand the sources of combat stress and take action to mitigate their effect. The leader must be a role model, develop stress management programs, and create a winning spirit. Although common sources of stress are listed and treatment forward is emphasized, little is offered on how to identify stress

casualties or techniques of treatment in the forward  
2  
area.

In order to counter the effects of combat stress, the individual and leader must recognize its manifestations. The symptoms that are commonly exhibited must be as familiar as radio procedures so that identification and treatment begin early and is continuous throughout the chain of command. The first step in this effort is answering the question what is combat stress?

### III. AN OVERVIEW OF COMBAT STRESS

Combat stress is one of the newest names for casualties once called shell shock, nostalgia, war neuroses or battle fatigue. It is as difficult to place a single name on this phenomena as it is to find a single definition. The Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines stress as a factor that causes tension or alters an equilibrium. Certainly combat stress is the result of a tension or change in the status quo, yet it is often confused with fear, cowardice and anxiety.

Moran differentiates between fear and cowardice. He considered fear a response by man's instinct of 3 self-preservation. Cowardice is an outward act of man. To Moran cowardice was the end that fear might drive a man. Fear is the internal emotional response to some external stimuli; therefore fear is a type of combat stress.

A study by the Marine Corps Amphibious Warfare School also considered fear an emotional response to a recognized source of danger. This study also defined anxiety as a tension or uneasiness created by the anticipation of danger. The difference between fear and anxiety is that fear is an emotional response and anxiety is a stress or tension created by an expected future event.<sup>4</sup>

The common ground in all studies is that stress is an internal reaction to an external stimulus. It is often described as anxiety, tension, worry or stress. Combat stress is simply the sum of all internal reactions by an individual that are caused by battlefield conditions,<sup>5</sup> events or environment.

Not all stress is bad. Stress can enhance physical performance like hand to hand combat. On the other hand it reduces the ability to think clearly, such as determining the most dangerous enemy vehicle to engage first.<sup>6</sup> The function of stress management is to provide techniques that allow individuals and groups of soldiers to use or reduce the effects of stress to improve combat effectiveness.

The sources of combat stress fall into three broad categories: individual, situational, and organizational (See Table 1). These categories provide a technique to identify sources of stress and develop a method to control their effect on individuals and units. This categorization

provides the leader a start point in stress management.

Once a general area of the source is identified, techniques of management can be tailored to relieve a specific type of stress.

INDIVIDUAL	SITUATIONAL	ORGANIZATIONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Threat to life, limb and health</li><li>*Physical discomfort</li><li>*Value conflicts</li><li>*No individual goal achievement</li><li>*Loss of sleep</li><li>*Imagination</li><li>*Letting buddies or the group down</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Isolation</li><li>*Loss of comrades</li><li>*Sights and sounds of wounded and dying</li><li>*Night and limited visibility</li><li>*Fluid operations</li><li>*Deep operations</li><li>*Continuous combat</li><li>*Over stimulation</li><li>*Extended combat</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Deprivation of sexual and social satisfaction</li><li>*Restriction of personal movement</li><li>*Lack of information and uncertainty</li><li>*Lack of privacy</li><li>*Enforced boredom</li><li>*Complex equipment</li><li>*Ineffective leadership</li></ul>

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TABLE ONE Sources of Stress

Combat stresses that effects the individual directly are the most difficult to detect. Often the effect of these stresses are coped with internally without an effect on the unit. Leaders should remember that soldiers define victory in battle by survival and by not letting buddies down.<sup>8</sup> The individual soldier must believe that the easiest way to insure self-preservation is through the elimination of the enemy.<sup>9</sup> This attitude is often manifested in the phrase 'get the job done and go home,' regularly heard on CNN during OPERATION DESERT SHIELD.

The strongest individual stress is the fear of death or mutilation. Soldiers rarely face death overtly. Most often they address it with humor or a disbelief that it could happen to them. Captain Robert Crisp, prior to OPERATION CRUSADER in North Africa in 1941, admitted to a curiosity about what would happen to him in the immediate future, but believed that if anything terrible happened it would happen to someone else. When soldiers begin to face death overtly, believing their name is on the next bullet, the chain of command should evaluate the situation and determine if relief is necessary.

The leader must remember that combat stress is in the eye of the beholder. The individual's perception of events or a specific situation determines the amount of stress generated. The perspective of the individual also determines if the stress generated is positive or negative. No two individuals cope with stress in the same manner and no one prescription will reduce the effects.

Those sources of stress that are rooted in situational differences may be the easiest to identify. Outside of combat a great deal of care is used in handling units when training accidents result in the death of soldiers. The chain of command, chaplains and counsellors descend on the unit to insure individuals can weather the emotional storm. The same considerations must be applied in combat where the loss of buddies may become a daily affair.

A similar military/civilian parallel exists between the effects of night or limited visibility and camp fire ghost stories. A ghost story told in bright sunlight may be entertaining, but when told in an atmosphere of limited light it achieves a stronger individual reaction. Military operations conducted in reduced visibility also generate strong reactions. Darkness is the unknown, and soldiers react to the unknown with fear. Soldiers will become cautious and hesitant for no other reason than they know not what to expect.

By far the strongest situational source of stress is isolation. This can be both physical isolation, like a one man guard post, or psychological isolation, as felt by a replacement. The Israeli Defense Force believes that isolation is the fastest road to individual psychiatric breakdown. Soldiers who do not identify with their unit, or who do not trust leaders, experience frequent transfers and have no sense of belonging. These are the first to quit in battle. Most often they think they are unable to preform so they do not. This quitting by one soldier can become the beginning of total unit collapse.

Since each person handles stress uniquely what is trouble for one person can be routine for another. Not everyone will be able to balance the many sources of stimulation in combat. The leader charged with occupying a

battle position must guarantee the completion of hundreds of tasks to construct a solid defense. If this leader does not use subordinates through delegation he may well become a stress causality himself due to over stimulation. This is regularly observed at the National Training Center where leaders try to do it all and become ineffective. This poor leader performance in turn creates additional organizational stress.

Organizational sources of stress effect groups of soldiers and are normally a function of the military system. Such problems as shortages, difficult duty or military routine are common sources of organizational stress. Leaders often do not recognize these sources because they are a product of the system that produces them. Vietnam produced a major change in the Code of Conduct to reduce this type of stress. During the war the Code only allowed a service member to give name, rank and serial number. This restrictive code caused many men to question their loyalty to their service because they exchanged additional information with their captors. After the war the Code was changed to read that this information only must be given, and then the soldier should resist to the best of his abilities.<sup>12</sup> Instead of limiting the individual, this change increased flexibility, thereby reducing stress.

Soldiers experience a restriction in movement or freedom when problems outside the military arise. Prior to deployment for an off post exercise I had a soldier absent himself without leave (AWOL) because his wife told him that she was leaving him. When I questioned him on why he went AWOL the soldier stated that he believed the Army would force his deployment, thus restricting his freedom and ability to save his marriage. This same restriction occurs during combat. Special duty such as manning an observation post or being subjected to prolonged artillery bombardment restricts movement and increases anxiety.

The application of technology can also create organizational stress. In our drive to field the newest and best equipment we often forget the man/machine interface. The M60A2 tank, removed from service in the early 80's, is a good example of this. The complicated fire control system at both the commander's and gunner's positions took a long time to master. Many soldiers became frustrated and only learned the minimums, reducing the effectiveness of the weapon system and the unit.

These sources of stress are compounded by many factors. External catalysts like noise, idleness, helplessness, fatigue, ignorance and weather increase the effect of these stressors. A weather change from clear to rain can slow a unit's activities just as the reversal can

act like a fresh beginning. By understanding the sources of stress and the conditions that change their effect leaders can focus on identifying the symptoms that manifest themselves in the individual. The identification of combat stress symptoms is the first step in rapid treatment.

Individuals rarely break down catastrophically. Before a person becomes ineffective warning signs are usually displayed. These signs are such things as behavior outside an established norm, a decrease in performance with an unwillingness to improve and a sense of guilt or fear. Other symptoms that may be observed in both groups and individuals are listed in Table Two. Since each individual reacts uniquely to stress, several symptoms may be manifested at once or just one at a time. The important point to understand is that stress has a cumulative

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INDIVIDUALS	GROUPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Trembling</li><li>* Racing pulse</li><li>* Bladder pressure</li><li>* Freezing</li><li>* Weapon firing</li><li>* Guilt</li><li>* Amnesia</li><li>* Disassociation</li><li>* Hallucinations</li><li>* Death wish</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Unwillingness to improve</li><li>* Apathy</li><li>* Panic</li><li>* Sick call</li><li>* AWOL</li><li>* Bickering</li><li>* Ignoring orders</li><li>* Insubordination</li><li>* Sensitivity to criticism</li></ul>

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TABLE TWO Symptoms of Stress

effect. Multiple stressful experiences do not toughen up a soldier. These experiences can broaden the base of knowledge used to cope with stress. It does not mean that resistance to stress increases.

Studies by both the United States Army and Israeli Defense Force concluded that stress response usually occurs in three stages. The first is an alarm reaction. The aim of this stage is to create a change, normally by eliminating the cause of the stress. Generally, physical performance is enhanced in this stage to the degradation of finer motor coordination and judgement. This stage is the equivalent to the excitement before a competition.

The second stage of stress response is characterized by resistance. The aim of this stage is to maintain control. The initial excitement is gone and the soldier fights to maintain control and complete the assigned mission. The closer this period resembles a previous experience the more likely the soldier will be to overcome his fear and cope with the generated stress.

The third stage, exhaustion, is brought on from prolonged exposure to stress which the individual can not cope with. The soldier uses up all resistance in attempting to cope with the stress. His aim becomes adapting to the situation. This is often achieved by falling asleep.

Each individual will progress through these reaction stages uniquely. For a leader to use the reaction to gage how his subordinates are handling stress he must know how they react under normal daily activities. When the leader knows how subordinates perceive a situation he will better be able to determine if the most critical stresses are  
15 being coped with.

Even though no two people react to stress identically a leader, knowing the probable symptoms and reactions, can be sensitive to the development of stress. Observation can be narrowed to susceptible groups. These groups are those in combat for the first time and those engaged in combat for many months. The first timers demonstrate the most dramatic symptoms. Veterans become apathetic, and show a lack of concern for their survival. Leaders in this group  
16 become indecisive and use poor judgement.

Before combat stress begins to effect individuals units can take actions to reduce its effect. These actions can be grouped into the six areas listed in table three. Many of

- \* Group integration
- \* Hope and Beliefs
- \* Personality
- \* Fitness
- \* Training
- \* Leadership

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TABLE THREE Stress Reduction Factors

these mitigators must be established well before combat, but their sustainment is critical to reduce combat stress.

Group integration includes pride, stability and a common group ethic. These traits can be established through success, careful assignment policies and group oriented goals and beliefs. Two other major proponents of group integration are functional primary groups and supporting secondary groups. Primary groups will form through common experiences. The goals and desires of these groups must match that of the unit or group breakdown <sup>18</sup> occurs. Control of secondary groups such as the family or nation are not within the unit's ability. Even so soldiers feel stress when isolated from these groups. Regular delivery of mail keeps soldiers in touch with these groups and normally provides support to the individual.

Beliefs have often focused a force in such a way that stress is eliminated. A common example of this is the conquest by the Moors as they spread the word of Islam. Since Allah would receive all fallen warriors in heaven a fanaticism was created that disregarded death. More powerful than belief may be hope. Hope sustains the soldier and provides him a coping mechanism. Knowing that the battle or war will not last forever allows the soldier to carry out duties in the most severe circumstances. The incorporation of leave, R & R centers and unit rotation

lets the soldier know an end is in sight. This end  
provides hope to withstand the current battle.

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One of the most effective methods in stress control is to develop some control techniques in the individual soldier. FM 26-2 emphasizes that the individual should learn the signs of stress he displays and methods like deep breathing which control the effect. It also suggests establishing realistic goals. By accomplishing these goals and reaching for others the individual develops self-esteem, self-reliance and drive, all of which help the individual channel stress to useful purposes.

One way to improve an individual self image and increase his ability to withstand stress is through fitness. Although dependent on age and conditions there is a strong relation between physical stamina and the ability to resist many sources of combat stress. This fitness must be maintained during combat through the execution of sleep plans, obtaining food and drink at regular intervals and providing time out of combat through R & R or unit rotation.

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Training that approaches actual combat conditions reduces the initial fears faced by the soldier. This training improves a soldier's confidence in himself, his equipment and his mates. It also enhances group integration by building groups which will provide both

physical and mental support in combat. Training defines routine and drill, while improving knowledge and establishing military discipline. It is this discipline that serves to make soldiers carry out orders over the instinct of self-preservation. This same discipline helps soldiers cope with stress in that comrades know what others <sup>21</sup> will do in a particular situation. They are bound by a common discipline.

Training also provides the leader the opportunity to master the techniques needed to reduce stress. By accomplishing missions in a stressful training environment the leader will develop confidence in himself reducing his own stress. These successes also allow subordinates gain confidence in the leader which reduces their stress. Training will allow the leader to observe his subordinates to determine their normal reactions and the effect of stress on these reactions. As the leader provides for basic unit needs, gives direction and keeps the unit informed, he develops strong leadership tools and reduces the effect of stress on assigned individuals. Units that are lead by effective leaders have a lower rate of battle <sup>22</sup> stress casualties than those with poor leaders. Training is one way to create these effective leaders.

Even when the effects of stress are reduced there is always the possibility of stress casualties. The

individual copes with stress like a circuit breaker controls electricity. Regular use will cause the breaker to trip over time. The cumulative effect of amperage spikes causes the circuit breaker to wear out. Stress does the same in the individual. Each individual can handle varying degrees of stress. When the stress circuit breaker trips it can normally be reset through treatment.

The first step in treatment of a combat stress casualty is to determine the severity. The United States Army recognizes three levels of combat stress: mild, moderate and severe. The more severe the case the farther the casualty must be evacuated from the front. The sooner treatment starts the more rapidly the casualty can be returned to duty. In situations like a contingency operation, where replacements are limited, this may be the only source to bolster unit losses.

The current treatment of stress casualties is based on principles developed in World War II. These are proximity, immediacy and expectancy. Treatment should be as close to the patient's unit as is practical and should start within that unit. Most importantly the outcome must be expected. Every stress casualty is expected to return to duty in the same unit doing the same job as soon as possible.

The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) uses these same principles in the treatment of its stress casualties. To

execute this treatment two psychologists are assigned to each brigade level command. The IDF uses questionnaires to gauge units before battle to determine their susceptibility to combat stress. These surveys create a before-battle profile which is used to monitor both units and individuals during battle. Once identified the IDF treatment system attempts to provide the stress casualty uninterrupted sleep, food and a clean uniform. Once awake the casualty is kept active by the psychologist, normally by walking and talking about the cause of stress. The goal is to get the casualty to recount the situation that caused his mental wound. The psychologist provides support, helping to rebuild confidence and self-image. Historically this method returns eighty per cent of all stress casualties <sup>26</sup> evacuated to the brigade level to duty.

Current United States Army organization makes the treatment of stress casualties a division responsibility. The first organization that is staffed to treat stress casualties is the mental health section of the medical company organic to the main support battalion. To receive treatment the casualty must be evacuated through three medical care levels before arriving at a treatment facility. This separates the casualty from the familiarity of friends and unit, which may slow recovery.

This discussion of combat stress focuses on the individual, but in today's Army individuals rarely

experience anything alone. From the time a recruit arrives at basic training until the final retirement parade, soldiers are part of squads, crews and teams. How stress effects the individual is manifested in these basic Army organizations.

#### IV. STRESS IN THE SQUAD AND CREW

Combat stress effects the squad in much the same way as it does the individual soldier. Although the squad is trained to act as an interdependent team no member gives up individual choice. If the action becomes more than an individual can bear he may choose not to continue. By going to ground and assuming a protected position the squad member is choosing not to fight. Squad effectiveness is degraded but it can still function. The vehicle crewman sacrifices individual choice. If one crewman chooses not to continue, the vehicle, or weapon system, ceases to function. This requirement for a coordinated effort to be effective demands a bond of trust that each crewman must do his job or the crew fails. When one crewman chooses not to

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fight it stops the entire team.

The vehicle is both a blessing and a curse to the crewman. Modern fighting vehicles protect optical, electrical and mechanical components by mounting them on some type of resilient material. This is done to reduce the effect of vibration on the vehicle's hardware. This

vibration is also responsible for crew fatigue since there is no damping mechanism between the source of the vibration and the operator. The fatigue produced enhances the combat stress imposed by the battlefield. Modern vehicles do reduce the sense of isolation felt by the individual.

Being organized into crews keeps people within a supporting physical distance. Thermal sights that allow observation through dust and smoke also reduce isolation external to  
29  
the crew.

Groups will be slower than individuals to display the effects of combat stress. The group is a coping mechanism since it ideally satisfies the personal needs of friendship, sympathy, recognition and respect. By providing these needs the group becomes a partial shelter  
30  
from the horrors of the battlefield. For the group to be a successful coping mechanism it must be formed by a mutual attraction of interdependence. It must also set standards of group behavior based on individual and group survival and then task accomplishment. This way it will  
31  
provide physical protection and psychological support. When formed by coercion, strict discipline or without mutual attraction the coping function of the group may be nonexistent.

The ability of the squad or crew to overcome stress directly effects its performance. The loss of personnel

alone may not reduce effectiveness. Leaders, both formal and informal can hold a squad together through several losses. Conversely if one of the leaders are the first casualty the organization may immediately fall apart.

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The more structured the situation the less combat stress will effect the unit. When the crew or squad have few choices they are more likely to focus their effort to the only possible option. The less coherent the information or fluid the situation the more likely that individuals will choose not to remain part of the group. Training on reaction drills is a method to develop small group stress coping techniques. When situations demand trained responses options are reduced, making the group act as one.

In On War Clausewitz states war is an act to force our

enemy to do our will. To achieve this end one side must create a fear in the individual soldier that is so great that he stops fighting. He must believe that he is no longer a member of a unit, but an individual who is isolated and alone against the enemy. The means to this end are the dead and wounded. Combat stress is a tool to create this fear that causes defeat. Before combat small units must focus their attention on preparing the team to face the facts of the battlefield and continue to fight as a single unit. Realistic combat-like training is the keystone to achieving this goal.

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Before training begins actions can be taken to begin transforming squads and crews into cohesive groups. This process should begin when assigned to the unit. The first step is the assignment of a sponsor. This sponsor orients the new member and assists in settling the new soldier. This sponsor should become a training buddy. The new soldier verifies skills with the help and oversight of his training buddy. This will begin to form a bond based on  
35  
task accomplishment.

Small groups designed to accomplish a task form the strongest bonds. The greater the interdependence among group members the more stable the group will be when facing battlefield conditions. The group will focus on task accomplishment in order to get the job done and remove itself from the combat situation. The ideal group contains from three to five individuals. This very small group is easily commanded and controlled in combat. These small groups can be used to make fire teams that build squads or vehicle crews used to build platoons.

After death or a wound, the greatest fear an individual faces is rejection by the group. The more dependent the group is on an individual the lower the chance that that  
36  
individual will be rejected. Since new group members desire acceptance they should be given responsible jobs which are recognized as important to the group. An example

of this might be assigning new soldiers as loaders on an improved TOW vehicle crew. The loader must continue to do his reloading task or the vehicle and remainder of the crew become ineffective; therefore, the crew is dependent on the actions of the loader as the safety of the crew is dependent on the actions of the track commander and gunner. This same argument would avoid making new men assigned to infantry squads rifleman. This is the most common position in the squad and although important the squad can function with the loss of one rifleman.

As a group bonds together based on task accomplishment it can begin to do preventive combat stress first aid. The three steps in preventive first aid are recognition, reassurance and relaxation. Recognition starts by identifying stressful situations and the common symptoms displayed. As soldiers become more dependent on one another they will be more willing to discuss a topic that admits fear. The second step, reassurance, emphasizes that a fear reaction is normal and can be channelled to positive ends. Finally, by teaching relaxation techniques like deep breathing each soldier can take action to cope with  
37  
external stress.

As this preventive first aid training and other training occurs groups should maximize the use of the after action review. The Army recognizes the usefulness of the

after action review because its lets every soldier know what happened during training while identifying both weaknesses and strengths. Just as rehearsals conducted before combat pat dividends so can post operations after action reviews. When each soldier describes the action he was involved in, he relives the combat situation. This mental review reduces the stress he feels. Each soldier increases the knowledge possessed about the battle, thus reducing the unknown and thereby reducing the negative effects of stress.

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Once groups are established based on task accomplishment that contain buddy teams, these teams should know what stress is and how to use after action reviews. Now these groups are ready to conduct realistic combat-like training. This phase of realistic training normally makes one think of the National Training Center. These unit rotations do approach combat situations through the use of the MILES force on force system and the live fire exercises. The tempo is hectic, often requiring a unit to plan and execute over ten missions in fourteen days. This type of rotation requires the employment of sleep plans at the crew and squad level while demanding real logistics operations. It does have shortfalls. It is not realistic; no one gets killed. The loss of one individual changes the capabilities of the group reducing its effectiveness. When

this loss is the leader the group loses its direction and  
39  
source of focus. This makes it vulnerable to  
disintegration. Even when leaders are MILES kills they are  
normally returned to duty. This eliminates a common war  
time stress, the requirement to fill a position beyond an  
individual's experience and education. The fourteen day  
rotation also lacks realism. Even when deployment time is  
considered the days of the rotation are a fraction of the  
days of DESERT STORM/SHIELD, Korea or World War II. Our  
realistic training must include extended time in harsh  
field conditions, incorporation of replacements while  
deployed, and the selection of leader replacements.

These techniques of buddy teams, after action reviews  
and realistic training are valid methods to reduce the  
effect of combat stress in both squads and vehicle crews.  
Although discipline does not overcome fear or reduce the  
effects of stress it is a piece of the mortar which creates  
interdependent groups. It is the type of discipline that  
should be different between squads and crews. Since a  
crewman relinquishes a portion of his personal freedom for  
the good of the crew, it is expected that the crewman will  
maintain an almost blind obedience type of discipline. The  
ammo bearer must continue to carry ammunition to the gun  
crew no matter the conditions. When the ammo is not  
delivered the weapon no longer functions. The squad member

must respond to situations in a drilled manner, but he must have more freedom to provide information into the group's response. When ordered to move, if this would expose himself or the squad to danger, then he must stop the action. The discipline of a group must reflect the demands of their military speciality.

Formal treatment of stress casualties at the lowest level is impossible. Neither the people or time are available at the lowest level to counter combat stress when it takes a firm hold. The squad and crew can do preventive medicine. In addition to debriefings the soldiers at this level should be given the maximum amount of freedom possible within mission constraints. Vehicle crewman get a chance to relax and recharge when living and moving unbuttoned, out of enemy contact or chemical threat.

Similarly individual soldiers release stress when visiting friends in other platoons. Learning they are alive and sharing past events reduces the unknown and its effect. Another possible treatment is physical exercise. The burning of calories is as good for the mind as it is for the body.

All methods to control or reduce the effect of combat stress focus on leadership. Current Army doctrine is correct in making the leader the centerpiece of effective stress management. The leader at every level must

demonstrate self management of stress. This leading by example builds confidence in subordinates reducing their stress. Surveys of the Israeli Defense Forces have found that leadership by example is the most effective. It reduces fear in individuals and provides support to the group.

When conditions are most stressful men feel overcome by fear. Individuals become confused about what to do. This stops the unit in a very dangerous position. When this occurs it is the leader who must stimulate action through clear simple orders and by his example. When the leader shows fear the unit is lost.

Before and during combat one of the most important responsibilities of the leader is to establish goals for the group. These goals give the group purpose and provide a channel for the collective energy of the unit. Once the purpose is defined the leader must drive the group toward mission accomplishment. As this is done the leader must preserve the integrity of the group and insure that group actions remain within established norms. As the group becomes more isolated the preservation of the group may become its only priority; this is when the effectiveness of the leader is tested. To achieve the military mission the leader must make the group believe that the best way to protect the group is to carry out its assigned orders.

In the chaos of battle the squad or crew is often unaware of the action they are part of. The leader must keep these groups informed. As the leader he will be privileged to more information through radio nets and orders. When disseminated to the lowest level the unknown is reduced. By providing this information to the individual squads and crews the leader protects their effectiveness. This line of communication must be maintained and when possible the physical presence of the leader has the greatest impact.

This presence also demonstrates that the leader is exposed to the same conditions as his men. This builds a bond of trust between the smallest groups and their common leader. The functional group, weapon system crew or squad, is where this bond begins. Since the first command leader is with these groups daily, loyalty is not focused at this first level. Normally it jumps to the command level that employs the group. Most often this is the company. It is this leader who is the focus of group loyalty and must insure that communication remains open down to the squad and crew level.

The leader can also make use of humor to release the pressure of combat stress. When used wisely humor causes individuals to laugh at themselves and take a deep breath which reduces the tension created by combat. This

technique of stress control can also be applied to squads or crews. If during after action reviews these groups laugh at their own actions or at some external source the same effect is achieved. The greatest impact would be achieved when the group laughs at itself. This would demonstrate confidence in the group and a strong internal bond.

The leader can also be a significant source of stress in subordinate groups. Drills have been developed to reduce the unknown in battle. If a condition is presented the group uses a drill to reduce the condition. If these drills are not executed by thinking leaders subordinates will lose faith in the leader. This may cause fear to manifest itself in the group as hesitation or apathy. If this lack of trust persists the leader may become alienated from the group. When this occurs the leader will be unable to make the group fight because the group will believe its preservation is endangered by the ineffective leader.

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The group leader can also be a catalyst to group disintegration. When things go badly pressure by the leader compounds the stress of failure. The leader who does not encourage his squads and crews during difficult times to get them back on track will lose these subordinates. They will turn toward their buddies sacrificing the cohesion of the larger group.

The characteristics of the small unit commander provide a good training focus for learning how to manage unit stress. During times of limited budgets stress management should be achieved through leader development. Leaders bear the heaviest pressure in battle. They are responsible for passing on information, but most important are the decisions they make and the stresses these create.<sup>49</sup> Leaders who can apply the characteristics in table four should be effective and thereby eliminate a major source of stress on squads and vehicle crews.

- \* Diligence in the care of men
- \* Fair unit administration
- \* Maintenance of military bearing
- \* Supply information to soldiers
- \* Courage, intelligence, fitness
- \* Respect the soldier

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#### TABLE FOUR Characteristics of the leader

Trust between leaders and followers develops slowly. This trust develops through the assignment of reasonable tasks, demonstrated care for the group, and removing those harmful to the group. As challenges are overcome this trust continues to develop. It is time and instability that erode this trust. Elimination through losses strengthens units but makes it more difficult for replacements to be accepted.<sup>51</sup> Studies on cohesion make it seem the answer

to countering the stresses of combat. Too often we forget that combat units are dynamic in nature. Each loss is replaced by an individual. The stability that makes units effective in peacetime is lost with the first casualty in battle. Again it falls back to the leader to counter combat stress. The staff sergeant must make the soldier part of the squad or crew just as the other leaders in the chain must rapidly incorporate replacements for the good of the total unit.

#### V. CONCLUSIONS

The wars of the future will have many of the same conditions that produce combat stress casualties today. They will also create new conditions unforeseen today. The unseen enemy will remain, and vision enhancement devices are eliminating the curtain of darkness. Air-Land operations will create deeper fights that will blur the front line and the difference between combatant and noncombatant. Even with these changes the Army can still prepare itself for the stresses of future war.

Doctrine must keep man in the center of decision making. As commanders expose crews to extreme risk doctrine must make sure that man is the key component in the control loop . The application of technology can not allow man to be eliminated from the decision cycle. Technology must be used to extend the powers and faculties

of man not become a surrogate for them. As long as men fight wars men must continue to make the life and death decisions of those wars.

Organizations should be built on primary groups. These three to five man groups should be formed around task accomplishment. These small groups should be the building blocks of organizations such as platoons, companies and battalions. As materiel like the three man crew multiple launch rocket launcher become the norm these primary groups will be forced to provide the only support a soldier receives on the distributed battlefield.

Training must continue to approach the realities of combat. The National Training Center and other maneuver training centers are a good start to this end but other actions are needed. Short notice contingency operations should be incorporated into the training center program. This would support the power projection military strategy being adopted. The extension of these maneuvers beyond the current fourteen day rotation would also closer approximate future conflicts. We have also allowed safety to restrict training that proved useful in World War II. Veterans felt that exposure to overhead fire and danger close artillery were extremely helpful in preparing for the  
53  
battlefield. These events should be encouraged today as preparation for combat.

Materiel development must keep the soldier at the forefront. Equipment employment should be simple. Complications become a source of stress. Crew positions should be adjacent to one another so that no member is isolated even during communications failures. These stations should be designed as extensions of the body. Head protection, restraints and muscle support should be included to reduce fatigue. Like the engine the crew should be mounted in such a way to dampen the vibrations produced by the vehicle.

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Leaders should be the focus of stress training. From the squad leader and vehicle commander to the highest combat commander combat stress must be recognized and understood. Leader development should address methods and techniques to control the effects of stress in units and how to manage stress in themselves. The leader who fails to control stress in himself will be unable to reduce combat stress in the units he leads. Because leaders from squad level up have the greatest impact on stress management they should become the training focus as dollars are reduced.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Roger J. Spiller, 'Shell Shock,' American Heritage (May-June 1990) 80-86; hereafter referenced as Spiller, 'Shell Shock'.
2. The discussion of current doctrine is a synthesis of the following manuals:
  - a. U.S. Army, FM 100-5 Operations (Washington: Department of the Army, 1986); hereafter referenced as FM 100-5
  - b. U.S. Army, FM 26-2 Management of Stress in Army Operations (Washington: Department of the Army, 1986); hereafter referenced as FM 26-2.
  - c. U.S. Army, FM 22-9 Soldier Performance in Continuous Operations (Washington: Department of the Army, 1983)
3. Lord Moran, The Anatomy of Courage (Garden City Park NY: Avery Publishing Group, Inc. 1987), 16; hereafter referenced as Moran.
4. 'Fear and motivation: An AWS Battle Study,' Marine Corps Gazette, 72 (August 1988):65; hereafter referenced as AWS Study.
5. FM 26-2, 4.
6. Elmar Dinter, Hero or Coward: Pressures Facing the Soldier in Combat (Totowa, NJ: F. Cass, 1985), 14; hereafter referenced as Dinter.
7. Table One is a summary of the following sources:
  - a. FM 26-2.
  - b. Dinter.
  - c. Anthony Kellett, Combat Motivation, the Behavior of Soldiers in Battle (Boston:Kluwer-Nijhoff publishers, 1982); hereafter referenced as Kellett.
8. Spiller, 'Shell Shock' 82.
9. Kellett, 302.
10. Robert Crisp, Brazen Chariots (New York: WW Norton & Company, Inc. 1959) 31.
11. Kellett, 101.

12. Edna J. Hunter, PhD and Howard T. Prince, COL, 'Stress and the Combat Leader,' Marine Corps Gazette 72 (August 1988): 63; hereafter referenced as Hunter & Prince.
13. Greg Lande, MAJ, 'Emotional First Aid -- the Commander's Role,' Infantry 76 (November-December 1986) 40-41; hereafter referenced as Lande.
14. Table Two is a synthesis of the following sources:
  - a. FM 26-2, 17.
  - b. Spiller, 'Shell Shock', 86.
  - c. AWS Study, 65.
15. The stages of reaction are based on the following sources:
  - a. FM 26-2, 5-6.
  - b. Ben Shalit, The Psychology of Conflict and Combat (New York: Praeger Publishing, 1988) 10-17; hereafter referenced as Shalit.
16. Brian Chermol, 'Battle Fatigue,' Infantry (January-February, 1984), 14.
17. Table Three is a summary of the following sources:
  - a. Dinter, 72.
  - b. AWS Study, 70.
  - c. FM 26-2, 35.
  - d. Brian G. McCaughey, CAPT, USN, 'Combating Battle Fatigue,' Marine Corps Gazette (February 1991) 40-41.
18. Kellett, 319.
19. The discussion of belief and hope is based on the following:
  - a. Moran, 70.
  - b. Dinter, 31 and 71-73.
20. FM 26-2, 27.
21. Kellett, 89, 92 and 324.
22. Shalit, 14.
23. Lande, 40.
24. FM 26-2, 21.
25. Hunter & Prince, 59.

26. Richard Gabriel, "Stress in Battle: Coping on the Spot," Army (December 1982), 38-42.
27. U.S. Army, FM 101-10-1/1 Staff Officer's Field Manual Organizational, Technical and Logistical Data, (Volume 1) (Washington: Department of the Army, 1987), 1-51 -- 1-52.
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29. Richard E. Simpkin, Human Factors in Mechanized Warfare (London: Brassey's Defense Publishers, 1983), 22; hereafter referenced as Simpkin, Human Factors.
30. Dinter, 41.
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33. Shalit, 146.
34. Dinter, 9.
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36. Dinter, 41-43.
37. Lande, 41.
38. Kellett, 283.
39. COL Ardant du Picq, Battle Studies in Roots of Strategy, Book 2 (Harrison, PA: Stockpole Books, 1987), 136 & 183.
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48. Shalit, 147-160.
49. Dinter, 101.
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